

Job Placements Prove Successful

Press Release

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PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. – After months of uncertainty, many civilian employees assigned to the former U.S. Space Command can breathe a sigh of relief after receiving new positions.

"Every single person in U.S. Space Command has been placed and a few are leaving civilian service after being offered incentive packages," said Irene Naukam of the Peterson AFB Civilian Personnel Flight.

Patricia Conner, of the Civilian Personnel Flight, described the near-simultaneous merger at Offutt AFB, Neb., between U.S. Space Command and U.S. Strategic Command and the creation here of U.S. Northern Command as a potential train wreck. But that train wreck never happened, she said.

Victory, she said, came on two fronts—placing U.S. Space Command employees and staffing the new command.

Of the 143 affected civilians from U.S. Space Command, 103 were placed at USNORTHCOM, 25 at other organizations here and eight went to U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt AFB, she said. A few remaining employees are opting for the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) or incentives for early retirement such as the Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA).

To support this reduction, the office began holding all Peterson Complex job vacancies to ensure a pool of positions following the general reduction-in-force announcements that went out in December 2002.

"I was never worried. I knew the system would take care of me and would transition me over [to NORTHCOM]," said Rachel Allison, now the chief of community relations for North American Aerospace Defense Command and NORTHCOM Public Affairs.

Allison said that her confidence was not universal though.

"There were a lot of people worried. When you're a head of household and you're put in a position like that, it creates a lot of stress."

"It was frustrating that you didn't find out until later on whether or not you had a job," said Jerry Schroeder, whose new position as assistant historian at NORTHCOM became effective April 6. "But in the end you can say that the system worked."

"Knowing whether I was going to be able to have a job in an economic downturn when people were being laid off at MCI and other places in town really complicated the situation," he said.

Standing up the nation's newest combatant command, U.S. Northern Command, on a very short timeline also proved challenging for the Civilian Personnel Flight.

"We were able in less than four months to provide civilian staff for U.S. Northern Command," Conner said.

"Polly Case, director of Civilian Personnel, and the men and women at the Civilian Personnel Flight bent over backwards to support the men and women who were civilian

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employees of U.S. Space Command. CPO worked hard to help the [Transfer of Function] employees and the RIF employees get placed here and in Omaha. I think they did a great job supporting the people and the command," said Army Col. Gene Kamena, former deputy chief of staff for NORAD and NORTHCOM.

NORTHCOM, charged with homeland defense and coordinating military assistance to civilian authorities, stood up on Oct. 1, 2002, just moments after U.S. Space Command's flag was cased and the organization merged with the former U.S. Strategic Command.

The Civilian Personnel Flight also was given authority, unprecedented in recent years, to fill NORTHCOM's positions locally.

Based on the criticality for NORTHCOM to stand up so quickly, the Air Staff at the Pentagon delegated authority to advertise and hire locally. The Civilian Personnel Flight here put a dedicated three-person team into overdrive to get the job done.